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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 003937

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL AU SU

SUBJECT: AUSTRIA ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT BASHIR'S POSSIBLE AU CHAIRMAN CANDIDACY

REF: STATE 226663

Classified By: Economic-Political Counselor Gregory E. Phillips for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) On December 21, Econ Unit Chief met with Caroline Gudenus, Head of the MFA's Sub-Saharan Africa Division, to discuss USG concerns regarding Sudanese President Bashir's possible candidacy to be Chairman of the African Union (AU). Gudenus said Austria, which assumes the EU Presidency January 1, would not formally exert any pressure on AU members to not elect Bashir. However, Gudenus emphasized that she and other EU officials informally voiced concern about a Bashir candidacy with AU member states on the margins of a December 2 troika in Bamako. According to Gudenus, the EU was keenly aware that if Bashir became Chairman, this would complicate the African Mission in Sudan, as well as the Abuja political talks.

¶2. (C) Gudenus said that she did not detect strong support for Bashir among AU member states. At Bamako, Gudenus said some AU states had mentioned possible alternatives, including Gabonese President Bongo, Congolese President Sassou, and Rwandan President Kagame.

MCCAW